



Tuesday, January 29, 2008 - Page updated at 12:00 AM

Permission to reprint or copy this article or photo, other than personal use, must be obtained from The Seattle Times. Call 206-464-3113 or e-mail resale@seattletimes.com with your request.

Sheriff's panel provides update on discipline

By Keith Ervin

Seattle Times staff reporter

The Sheriff's Blue Ribbon Panel offered a progress report Monday on what King County has done to implement the panel's recommendations on discipline and misconduct in the sheriff's office.

In an appearance before the Metropolitan King County Council, panel members gave high marks to Sheriff Sue Rahr, County Executive Ron Sims and the council for funding and implementing many of the panel's original recommendations.

The council, acting on the panel's 2006 report, passed an ordinance creating an independent oversight office, to monitor internal investigations. But in response to a complaint by the King County Police Officers Guild, the county put the ordinance on hold while it bargains details with the union, which represents sheriff's deputies.

Panel Chairman and former County Executive Randy Revelle said Rahr has made "significant progress" by taking a more active role in labor negotiations, telling employees what kind of conduct is expected, setting up an internal investigations review group, developing a staff training plan and reaching out to citizens.

The panel said in its progress report it was "very pleased" that Sims and the County Council had appropriated money to hire more supervising sergeants, improve training and operate the yet-to-be-created oversight office.

But because work conditions are subject to collective bargaining, the panel reported, Rahr has been unable to adopt performance standards for deputies, evaluate their performance or create an "early intervention system" to help troubled deputies deal with personal issues.

The panel recommended that the Charter Review Commission propose a county charter amendment to allow the sheriff, rather than the county executive, to bargain working conditions with the union. The executive would still negotiate wages and benefits.

Revelle said the sheriff should have gotten that authority when voters made it an elected office in 1997.

Sims' spokeswoman Carolyn Duncan said the executive doesn't support giving the sheriff that responsibility.

Keith Ervin: 206-464-2105 or kervin@seattletimes.com

Copyright © 2008 The Seattle Times Company